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By K NARA Date

8-11-03



Department of State

TELEGRAM

SECRET 109

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 /026 W

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FM AMEMBASSY KABUL

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4217

INFO AMEMBASSY ANKARA IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY BONN IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY LONDON IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY PARIS IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY ROME IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN IMMEDIATE

CINCPAC

KABUL 5222

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: EXEMPT

TAGS: PINS, AF

SUBJ: AFGHAN COUP: INITIAL ASSESSMENT

REF: A) KABUL 5188 (NOTAL); B) KABUL 189 C) KABUL 5193

D) KABUL 5197 E) KABUL 5220

1. FROM ALL INDICATIONS DURING THIS VERY LONG DAY, PRINCE MOHAMMAD DAUD, 65-YEAR OLD FIRST COUSIN OF KING MOHAMMAD ZAHIR (AND FORMER STRONGMAN PRINCE OF AFGHANISTAN 1953-63), HAS EXECUTED BRILLIANTLY ORGANIZED TAKEOVER OF COUNTRY, SUPPORTED PRIMARILY BY SMALL NUMBER OF DISSIDENT MILITARY OFFICERS (ALL YOUNG AND OPPOSED TO KING AND SON-IN-LAW MAJGEN ABDUL WALI), PRINCE DAUD IN SINGLE STEP HAS ABOLISHED MONARCHY, INVALIDATED 1964 CONSTITUTION, AND DECLARED AFGHANISTAN REPUBLIC WITH HIMSELF AS HEAD (WITH TITLE AS

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YET UNCLEAR).

2. COUP HAS BEEN GREETED WITH SOME VISIBLE PUBLIC JUBILATION IN KABUL, THOUGH COMPLETELY UNAWARE OF HOW NEW GOVERNMENT IS TO BE ORGANIZED AND CONDUCTED (WHETHER BY MILITARY OR RETURNED TO CIVILIAN CONTROL), KABUL POPULACE APPEARS TO BE EXPRESSING FULL SUPPORT FOR REGIME AND RELIEF THAT INEFFECTIVE CORRUPT LEADERSHIP OF KING AND HIS IMMEDIATE FAMILY IS ENDED.

3. AS ANY OBSERVER THIS POLITICALLY FRAGMENTED SOCIETY IS AWARE, HOWEVER, KABUL APPROVAL ALONE DOES NOT MEAN COUNTRY TOTALLY SUPPORTS TAKEOVER. PRELIMINARY INDICATES ARE THAT CRITICALLY IMPORTANT POSITION OF PASHTUN TRIBES IN EAST AND SOUTH IS SUPPORTIVE; AND IT APPEARS EXTREMELY UNLIKELY THAT DAUD WOULD HAVE ENGINEERED COUP WITHOUT HAVING KNOWN WHICH WAY MANY OF THEM WOULD LEAN. ON OTHER HAND, BOTH KING AND ABDUL WALI HAVE ASSIDUOUSLY CULTIVATED TRIBAL SUPPORT, PRIMARILY IN PAKTIA AND KANDAHAR AREAS FOR MANY YEARS. ABDUL WALI HIMSELF FOR YEARS HAS PERSONALLY RECRUITED ARMY OFFICERS FROM PAKTIA PROVINCE ON WHOSE SUPPORT HE COULD RELY; AND SO LONG AS KING AND ABDUL WALI REMAINED ALLIED, PROSPECTS FOR A COUP FROM OTHER OUTSIDERS SEEMED QUITE REMOTE -- UNTIL TODAY, OF COURSE.

4. IT IS LIKELY, THEREFORE, THAT WIDESPREAD PURGE OF ARMY SOON WILL TAKE PLACE. AT SAME TIME, DAUD AND HIS SUPPORTERS WILL BE MOVING QUICKLY TO CONVENE TRIBAL JIRGAHS AND OBTAIN OATHS OF FEALTY FROM AS MANY AS POSSIBLE OF KING'S AND ABDUL WALI'S TRADITIONAL SUPPORTERS. AT PRESENT, IT WOULD BE DIFFICULT TO ASSESS LIKELIHOOD OF WIDESPREAD TRIBAL REACTION AGAINST NEW REGIME; BUT IT AT LEAST CONCEIVABLE THAT OPPOSITION WILL CROP UP AND WILL HAVE TO BE SUPPRESSED OVER PERIOD OF NEXT FEW MONTHS.

5. MAIN CASUALTY OF TAKEOVER IS DOWNFALL OF DYNAMIC SIX-MONTH OLD GOVERNMENT OF MOUSSA SHAFIQ. SHAFIQ REPORTEDLY UNDER ARREST AND MEMBERS HIS GOVERNMENT EITHER ARRESTED OR DETAINED. WHATEVER HAPPENS TO HIM, WE SEE NO CHANCE SHAFIQ WILL PLAY ANY ROLE IN NEW GOVERNMENT. DAUD AND SHAFIQ PREVIOUSLY REPORTED ON VERY POOR TERMS. SHAFIQ CLOSELY IDENTIFIED WITH DEPOSED ROYAL FAMILY IN RECENT YEARS; AND

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AS PRINCIPAL ARCHITECT OF 1964 CONSTITUTION (WHICH DEPLORED INITIAL COMMUNIQUE OF NEW GOVERNMENT) HIS EARLY PROMISE OF MORE EFFECTIVE, CONSTITUTIONAL GOVERNMENT NOW DOOMED.

6. NEW GOVERNMENT LIKELY TO BE AUTHORITARIAN, HIGHLY NATIONALISTIC, PURITANICAL AND REFORMIST, IN MANYWAYS PERHAPS SIMILAR TO DAUD REGIME OF 1953-63. IN FOREIGN AFFAIRS, DAUD GOVERNMENT WILL UNDOUBTEDLY SEEK MAINTAIN CLOSE AND FRIENDLY RELATIONS WITH USSR AS WELL AS NON-ALIGNED POLICY STANCE OF PREDECESSOR. RELATIONS WITH THE UNITED STATES MOST LIKELY WILL BE CORDIAL BUT CORRECT, BUT BEYOND THAT, WE WILL HAVE TO WAIT AND SEE. WITH LUCK AND DELICATE HANDLING, NEW REGIME NEED NOT NECESSARILY PRESENT THREAT TO ANY MAJOR US INTERESTS. MAIN FOREIGN POLICY QUESTION IN REGION FOR NEW REGIME WILL BE WHAT TO DO ABOUT PASHTUNISTAN QUESTION, WHICH WAS PURSUED WITH HARDLINE FERVOR BY DAUD IN EARLY 1960'S AND WHICH LED TO HIS DOWNFALL IN 1963. PRESUMABLY HE WILL ADOPT STRONG POSITION AGAINST RECENT DIVIDE-AND-RULE TACTICS OF BHUTTO IN NWFP AND BALUCHISTAN, BUT IF HE LEARNED ANYTHING FROM HIS EXPERIENCE OF 10 YEARS AGO, HE WILL APPLY THIS POLICY MORE JUDICIOUSLY, PERHAPS IN FASHION RESEMBLING HIS PREDECESSORS OF RECENT YEARS AT LEAST IN SHORT TERM FUTURE. WE KNOW LITTLE OF DAUD'S ATTITUDE TOWARD IRAN, ALTHOUGH ONE REPORT DESCRIBES HIS ALLEGEDLY VIOLENT OPPOSITION TO RECENTLY CONCLUDED HELMAN WATERS TREATY WHICH HAD NOT YET BEEN DECREED BY KING NOR RATIFIED BY IRANIAN PARLIAMENT. IF DAUD SHOULD BOW TO NATIONALIST OPPOSITION THAT OPPOSED TREATY, HE MIGHT SCRAP IT; ON OTHER HAND, IF HE PURSUES MILITANT POLICY ON PASHTUNISTAN, HE MIGHT BE INCLINED TO SUPPORT TREATY TO OBTAIN POTENTIAL BENEFIT OF ALTERNATIVE ACCESS TO SEA THROUGH IRAN.

7. WE CAUTION ADDRESSEES TO TAKE NOTE OF VERY PRELIMINARY NATURE THIS ASSESSMENT. AFTER 10 YEARS OUT OF POWER, DAUD HAS HAD AMPLE TIME TO REFLECT ON HIS PAST PERFORMANCE AS HEAD OF GOVERNMENT, TO REVIEW STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF HIS RECORD AND TO PLAN PERHAPS FOR MAJOR CHANGES AND DEPARTURES FROM HIS PREVIOUS POLICIES. IT ALSO POSSIBLE IN VIEW DAUD'S AGE AND INITIALLY WEAK POLITICAL POSITION THAT AFTER 10 YEARS OF RELATIVE FREEDOM, HE WOULD NEITHER BE

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ABLE TO IMPOSE NOR WOULD AFGHAN SOCIETY ACCEPT SO EASILY HIS HIGH-HANDED AUTHORITARIAN METHODS OF 10 YEARS AGO AND THAT (1) HE MAY HAVE TO SHARE POWER TO GREATER EXTENT THAN HE WOULD OTHERWISE PREFER OR (2) HE MAY BE FORCED TO PURSUE EXTREMELY CAUTIOUS POLICY ON ALL FRONTS DURING PERIOD OF CONSOLIDATION HIS PERSONAL POWER.

8. IN VIEW OF THE UNCERTAINTY OF DAUD'S PROVINCIAL SUPPORT, LACK OF INFORMATION ON NEW GOVERNMENT STRUCTURE, AND OTHER CONSTITUTIONAL AMBIGUITIES, IT IS PREMATURE ADDRESS QUESTION OF DIPLOMATIC RECOGNITION BY USG. DAUD REPORTEDLY HAS SAID HE BELIEVES HE WILL HAVE SITUATION WELL IN HAND IF NO SERIOUS COUNTERCOUP ATTEMPT OCCURS WITHIN 48 HOURS. (REFTEL). NEUMANN

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